

# ADVICE FOR CLUB SECRETARIES

## PREPARATION FOR THE MATCH

There are a number of activities that take place before a match. You are responsible for these but some may be delegated to other club officers.

### Match Confirmation

Please ensure that you confirm your matches with your visitors and your match officials in good time. Refer to League Rule 8.13. Remember that Clubs change personnel so not everybody will be aware of your venue.

Maximum notice should be given to your opponents. In the event that there is a clash of colours the away team will normally change. This includes goalkeeper's jerseys so that they do not wear the same colours as outfield players. This should be confirmed in writing to avoid error and confusion.

Make sure that no part of the kit clashes. Where the shirts & shorts are different but the socks are the same colour the away side should take a change of socks.

Where a club is able to, this role may be delegated to a Match Secretary.

You may also request of your opponents about how many Club Officials will be requiring hospitality to allow for sufficient catering. Some clubs only have one or two officials that travel with their team; there are some clubs that may have considerably more officials.

Send your confirmation by email requesting a read receipt (an option in your email application).

Ask match officials to confirm receipt of the match details no later than 48 hours before the match (ie 3pm Thursday for a Saturday game). If you have not heard back from a match official by this time then let the Referees or Assistants Referees Secretary know. Do not leave this until the Friday because this makes it more difficult to source replacements if necessary.

### Example Letter/Email To Match Officials

"Referee Name" [Referee]

"Assistant Referee 1 Name" [Assistant Referee]

"Assistant Referee 2 Name" [Assistant Referee]

This is to confirm that you have been appointed Match Officials for the following match:

*Home Team FC* v *Away Team FC*

Competition: Combined Counties League Premier Division

Date: Saturday "*Date of Match*" Kick-off: 3pm

At: "*The Address of Your Ground*"

[Local area map and directions attached]

"*Home Team*" FC colours are "*Colour of shirts*" Shirts, "*Colour of shorts*" Shorts and "*Colour of socks*" Socks. Goalkeeper – "*Colour of keepers jersey*"

Hot or cold drinks will be supplied before the game and at half time. Light refreshments will be provided after the game.

I look forward to welcoming you to the "*Name of your ground*".

### Example Letter/Email To Visitors

Dear "*Name of opposition Secretary*"

Re: Home Team FC v Away Team FC

On: Saturday "*Date of Match*" Kick-off: 3pm

At: *"The address of your ground"*

[Local area map and directions enclosed]

I have pleasure in confirming the above Combined Counties Premier Division League fixture. *"Home Team"* FC colours are *"Colour of shirts"* Shirts, *"Colour of shorts"* Shorts and *"Colour of socks"* Socks. Goalkeeper – *"Colour of keepers jersey"*

Admission Prices: Adults £*"your gate fee"*; Concessions £*"your gate fee"*:  
Proof of age may be asked for

Please send details of your club history, player pen pictures, team photo and probable line up to myself. Email address is *"youremailaddress"* as soon as possible. (If you produce an electronic programme) We now produce our matchday programme electronically and publish it online here (where possible include link to area where the programme is published – if this is not possible - tell the recipients where they can find the programme)

Catering will be provided for team officials and players after the game in our clubhouse.

Light refreshments will be provided for visiting Directors/Committee Members, in the boardroom [or appropriate area]; half hour prior to kick-off; at half time and after the game.

I look forward to welcoming you to *"The name of your ground"*

Items in italics & in quotes are for you to supply relevant details.

## **Cup Competitions**

Ensure that you are aware of the format of the competition [e.g. whether there is a replay, extra time, and penalty shoot out etc]. Some FA competitions leave it to the clubs to decide whether to play extra-time or not in the first match, check the rules beforehand.

Check the eligibility of your players for the competition. Have they been registered the prerequisite time before the match? Is this a postponed or replayed match, if so are only players eligible for the original match allowed to play?

Ensure that none of your players have played for another club in the same competition in the current season. Most competitions prohibit players from doing this. If this is a semi-final or final match, ensure that your players meet the eligibility requirements for this stage of the competition.

Make sure that you have the appropriate results forms/team sheets required for the competition.

## **Travelling to Away Matches**

Ensure you send your club history and possible line up to your opponents. Do not just work on the minimum, send pen pictures for players and any other information that is usually used in a match programme. Your opponents may be unable to use the information but if you make it available it may be used. You should also advise your hosts of the number of Club Officials attending to assist with them providing sufficient catering.

When travelling to away fixtures ensure that sufficient time is allowed for the journey allowing for any road works or other causes of delay to ensure that the appointed kick off is adhered to. You will be fined if you are responsible for a late start.

Make sure that everyone knows where they are going. Obtain and distribute directions to the opponents ground or make sure SATNAV details are distributed.

Your club will receive eight passes for entry in to the ground for your Combined Counties League & Cup fixtures. For development and youth league games you will receive 4 passes. Ensure these are provided to people who should have these

passes and will observe the league rules and respect for other clubs. You will be held responsible for their behaviour.

Ensure that there is at least one club representative travelling with the team, other than management team and players. These people should make their presence known to the officials of the home club when arriving and should attend the home clubs boardroom and take advantage of any hospitality provided before the match, at half time and after the match unless otherwise notified.

### **Match Programmes**

All clubs (Premier & Division One) must produce a match programme for home matches (Refer to League Rule 8.14). This must, as a minimum, include details of the players (name & playing number) of both sides, the colours in which the teams will play and details of the match officials. The league sponsors adverts must also be included. These will be sent to you before the start of the season.

The club secretary is responsible for seeing that the programme is produced. The role of programme editor is one that may be delegated to another person.

Be aware that any comments that appear in the club programme are attributed to the club. If any inappropriate criticism is made of the FA, County FA, the League, its officers, appointed match officials or any other club, you could find yourself on a charge with the County FA.

You are also required to provide details to your opponents for away games. This must be provided in adequate time to allow the programme to be produced.

Match programmes must be provided to visiting officials of the opposing club and any league officials. You are also required to provide programmes in the dressing rooms for the players & match officials. If officials of the FA or county FA visit your ground for a match you should also provide them with a programme.

Match programmes may be produced electronically and be held on line. Links to the programme must be provided to visitors and spectators up to 24 hours before the match. The programme must be live for the whole of the current season.

### **MATCH DAY DUTIES**

See "Suggested Hospitality Criteria For Home Clubs" later in this guide.

### **Match Balls & Substitution Boards**

Match balls that meet the requirements of Law 2 of the Laws of Association Football and in accordance with the competition rules have to be provided. At least three must be available, refer to league rule 14.9. The Combined Counties League requires that the sponsor's ball is used for all Combined Counties League & Cup matches including Development, Youth & Veterans competitions. The league allows clubs to use these balls in other outside competitions.

Substitution boards must be made available by the home club for use during the match. Failure to have these available could mean the referee refuses to allow a substitution to take place.

### **Team Sheets**

An official competition team sheet must be fully completed and handed to the match referee and opponents at least forty five [45] minutes prior to kick off. Rule 8.19. For Development & Youth teams this is thirty [30] minutes prior to kick off.

### **Texting & Telephoning of Results**

Results of all matches, including competitions outside of the jurisdiction of this League, must be reported to the League Results Service immediately after the match and no later than 5.15pm (1.30pm for morning matches and 10.00pm for evening matches).

All Clubs must report their results using the SMS text messaging system. If, for any reason, a text message cannot be sent the result should be reported by telephone. (See "Reporting Of Results Using Texting To Full Time" later in this guide).

Clubs playing at home without floodlights should not delay reporting their result. Telephone the result as soon as it is practical to do so.

Where extra time is necessary in cup competitions, the 90 minutes score **must** be reported in by 5.10pm or immediately following the 90 minutes, and then a further thirty (30) minutes will be permitted for the final score. This means that you will need to report the result twice, once at full time and once after extra time including the result after penalties if applicable.

When a result needs to be reported by telephone the League Results Service should be contacted on **07970 796624** unless otherwise stated in the weekly bulletin.

Clubs are reminded of the need to report the attendance at first team matches to the results service and the names of goal scorers to the Hon Fixtures Secretary as detailed below. It is advised that the result is reported immediately following the end of the match. Other information may be reported later as it is the result that must be conveyed to the press by a fixed deadline.

If you are playing away in an outside competition you still need to report your result to the league results service as well as to the appropriate results contact for the outside competition.

### **Attendances**

Please include all attendees including club officials and non-paying guests and any season ticket holders. The attendance is not a measure of how many paying customers were at the game. You are not going to be penalised for giving the correct number.

All clubs should have a proper system in place for counting and analysing gate receipts that can be scrutinised upon request. This is an FA requirement.

The league requires that the attendance is reported both to the Hon Fixtures Secretary and on the result sheet.

### **Goal Scorers**

For all Combined Counties League matches the goal scorer information must be completed on the results sheet.

For all Premier & Division One League & Cup matches, the **home** Club is also required to report to the league the names of the scorers of ALL goals scored in the match, including those scored by the away team, plus the time that each goal was scored.

This information must be communicated to the Fixture Secretary no later than midday on the Sunday, following Saturday matches, preferably by e-mail (alanc52@aol.com) or fax (01784 772441 or 01784 451614).

If it is not possible to use either of these methods of communication, a message may be left on 07956 930719. If phoning, please speak clearly and slowly and leave a message as follows:-

"Home Team Name    Score            Away Team Name    Score

Home Team scorers: Player 1 Name, xth minute, Player 2 Name, yth minute, etc

Away Team scorers: Player 1 Name, xth minute (penalty), Player 2 Name, yth minute, etc

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Please ensure that either the first name or the player's initial is included and indicate if the goal was scored from the penalty spot.

For midweek matches communicate the information no later than the next day.

### **Paying of Match Officials**

Match Officials **must** be paid in the match official's dressing room after the match. Payments must not be made in the clubhouse after a match.

### **Club Assistant Referees**

Clubs are reminded that club individuals acting as Assistant Referees are entitled to the appropriate fee.

They do not have to accept but the Home Club must offer to make the payment.

Where the league is unable to appoint an Assistant Referee to any match or where the appointed Assistant Referees is unable to attend, it is the home clubs responsibility to provide someone who is capable of filling the role of an Assistant Referee.

### **Results Sheets**

Complete the appropriate sheets on the pad provided by the Combined Counties League, as soon as possible following the match, ensuring all details are correct. These must be posted to the correct person as soon as possible after the match: the person to whom they should be sent is shown at the foot of each form. The league will also accept the result sheet scanned and emailed or sent by Fax.

### **Marking of Referees**

Please refer to the GUIDE FOR MARKING OF REFEREES in the back of this guide for the regulations governing the marking of match officials.

The appropriate sheet of the results forms should be completed and sent to the League Referees Secretary. However, you are now able to download the electronic form from the league website and email this form.

This must be within 48 hours of the match. Any mark of '60' or below should be accompanied with supporting comments.

Marks for matches in the Premier Division should be submitted via MOAS which is the system used by the FA to appoint Level 4 officials. Marks for remaining matches should be submitted by email on the appropriate form to the League Referees Secretary.

### **Referee Reports**

At the end of each game the referee will pass a form to a representative of both teams to confirm which players have been cautioned or sent off. These forms are for information only (not discussion) and will assist Secretaries in both completing their result sheets and knowing what the fine is for when you get it! In addition any breaches of rule that the referee reports to the League are entered online and a confirmation will be sent to the club secretary.

Please ask your referee if they don't pass the form to you after the match, although in the happy event of the referee confirming that no player has been disciplined during the match there will be no need to waste a form.

### **Fines**

Make sure that you read the League Rules & Regulations including the Interpretation of Rules in this guide. Knowing what is expected should help avoid fines. If in doubt ask for advice. League officers are always willing to advise you.

However, It is inevitable that some clubs will incur a fine or two during the season. It is just as inevitable that, on occasions, clubs will feel that that the fine has been issued in error for whatever reason.

If that is the case, there is a formal appeal procedure that you can follow which is shown in the handbook as part of rule 16. Please remember though that there is a

fee to be paid (currently £50) should you decide to go down that route. If the appeal is lost then so is the appeal fee, so clubs and secretaries need to consider carefully whether or not there are genuine grounds for appeal before going ahead.

Before embarking upon a formal appeal, the League does allow an informal opportunity, whereby if you think there has been an error, you can contact the Officer who issued the fine (this information will be shown on the fine sheet). If the League Officer accepts that there has been an error, or further information has come to light that might lead to the conclusion that the fine should not have been issued, he/she will agree to rescind it and will advise the Fines Secretary accordingly. If the fine has been issued by a match referee, the Referees' Secretary may be able to assist. Please be courteous when you contact the relevant League Officer. It is stating the obvious to say that ranting and raving will not help your case.

If the League Officer does not accept that the fine should be rescinded, you then need to choose whether to accept the fine or submit a formal appeal, as per rule 16.

If it is a "standard" fine, issued for any number of reasons, such as bench infringements, late submission of team/result sheet etc., any appeal must be sent to the League Secretary in the first instance. You have 14 days in which to appeal against a fine and it can be done by email initially but cannot be considered unless/until you have paid the appeal fee of £50. If you pay by cheque, this will be held in abeyance until your appeal has been heard by the Management Committee. If the appeal is upheld, the fine will be cancelled and your appeal fee will be returned. If not, your appeal fee will be forfeited.

Appeals will generally be considered by the Management Committee on the basis of the documents before them, including your appeal statement. Clubs can choose to appear personally at the appropriate Management Committee meeting if they wish to do so.

If your appeal is rejected, you then have the opportunity to appeal to the Football Association and, again, the procedure is shown within Rule 16. Generally speaking though, you need to be confident of winning the appeal as the fee for an FA appeal is £250, which is likely to be forfeited if you lose the case and there may also be costs on top.

For more serious offences (e.g. failure to fulfil a fixture, ineligible player, etc.) you will be charged with the relevant offence by the League (usually by an emailed letter). You then have 14 days in which to either accept the charge or give your reasons why you think the charge is erroneous. The matter will then be considered at the next Management Meeting and if you are found guilty of the offence in question, you will be advised by email with details of the fine imposed.

Again, if you feel that the fine has been imposed in error, you have the right of appeal to the Football Association.

All fines are issued by the Fines Officer. HOWEVER, EVEN IF YOU THINK A FINE IS WRONG, YOU SHOULD NOT CONTACT THE FINES OFFICER AS HE WILL NOT HAVE SPECIFIC DETAILS OF THE CASE. HIS ROLE IS TO ISSUE FINES PASSED TO HIM EITHER BY COLLEAGUES ON THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OR BY REFEREES.

The time allowed to pay any fine will be shown on the fine sheet, or letter, as appropriate. Usually you will have 28 days from the date of issue in which to pay any fine. It is very important that you pay within the stipulated time, as further fines can and will be issued for non/late payment. If you pay a fine electronically, you MUST inform the Fines Secretary by email that you have done so giving payment & fines references.

## **Fixture Changes**

The League publishes an annual fixtures list. Postponements & commitments in FA & other outside competitions mean that fixtures sometimes have to change.

Read and check the league bulletin each week to ensure fixtures are correct for your own club. Any discrepancies should be immediately brought to the attention of the League Fixtures Secretary.

### **Lodging a Complaint or Protest**

If you feel that the league has made a mistake then you should lodge a protest to a league decision. The league officers are volunteers who give up their time to run the league. They are not infallible and will always admit a mistake if one has been made. However, you must provide evidence to show that a mistake has been made when you submit your protest.

Complaints must be made in writing to the League General Secretary or to the appropriate Secretary of that division or competition.

Please refer to League Rule 16. The rules governing a protest are clear. You must include the protest fee and it must be made in the time allowed. If a protest is submitted outside of the time limit or without the protest fee it will not be processed by the league.

The written decision following the protest, should you be unsuccessful, will give you direction upon how to appeal to the FA. The procedure for appeals to the FA is also contained in the League Handbook.

### **Outside Competitions**

Your first team may not enter any other competition with the exception of the FA Cup; FA Vase or County Senior Cup to the county to which your club was first affiliated to without the prior permission of the Combined Counties League.

The result of any match in an approved outside competition must be reported to the league results service.

## **PLAYER REGISTRATIONS**

Many new secretaries hit problems applying the rules regarding player registrations. Players often sign for a club without giving all of the details of their recent background in football.

It is your responsibility to get that information and ensure that the player is eligible to sign for your club. You must ensure that the player does not owe money to a former club, is not suspended by any County Association, is not under contract to another club, does not need international clearance and is not already registered for a club in the league.

You need to be familiar with the FA rules, county association rules and the league player status & registration Rule 6.

### **Player Status**

The status of a player can be qualified as contract players or non-contract.

A contract player is one that has duly signed the appropriate forms which have been submitted to The Football Association; a Players Contract, form G2, together with the agreement as issued by The Football Association.

That player may only play for the Club with whom the contract has been signed under the jurisdictions of the league in which the club play and The Football Association. The only way to be released from this contract, unless of a serious breach of misconduct, is to transfer the form to another Club (Football Association form H) or for the contract to be mutually cancelled between the parties concerned.

A non-contract player is one that has signed the relevant league form for a Club under the rules of the League in which the club participates. A player who is non-contract can play for other clubs in other leagues as long as the relevant transfer paperwork is completed fully and correctly. Note that FA rules regarding the approach to a player who is registered with another club must be obeyed including the seven day notice period. The registration of a non-contract player expires at the end of the season and he must be reregistered for the following season.

### **International Clearance**

It is your responsibility to obtain International clearance for a player from overseas. Overseas means that the player has played outside of England [that also means in Wales; Northern Ireland and Scotland]; it doesn't matter whether the player is English or foreign, he needs International Clearance if he has been playing abroad.

The player must have a valid international clearance certificate to be able to sign a registration form or a contract form. The Football Association will always answer any requests with regards to the players' eligibility. Forms are available on the FA ICE web site or from the FA Registrations dept.

The league may declare that the player's registration is valid but if it later transpires that the player required International clearance from the FA and this was not obtained then you will be at fault. The registration with the league will be declared invalid and penalties will be imposed by the FA & the league.

### **Signing a Player from another Club**

If a player that you wish to sign for your club, is registered for another club (in this league or in another league), you must first give 7 days notice of an approach to that player in line with FA rules. This applies even if the player approaches you and wishes to join your club. Failure to give 7 days notice could land you with a charge of making an illegal approach to a player.

You must give your 7 days notice in writing. Some suggested words for use in an approach letter are:-

"We, the 'name of your club' Football Club, hereby give formal notice of our intent to approach your registered player 'name of player', in compliance with the requirements of The Football Association Rule C2 (a) [ii].

If you are prepared to waive the seven day period could you please contact me and advise accordingly."

At the end of the 7 day period you may talk to the player and if he agrees to sign for your Club you have a total of twenty eight days (including the 7 day lapse) in which to complete the signing of the player. If the player is in the same league the player has to sign a relevant transfer form.

You are only allowed to make one approach for a player at a Club in twenty eight days; you must wait 28 days before approaching another player at the same club. You are not allowed to make more than one approach for the same player in one season.

### **Checking that a Player is Eligible**

When registering a player, it is often advisable to contact the county FA office and ask if the player is eligible or has any suspensions pending. The county offices are generally very helpful in this respect. The FA Whole Game System will also have the correct data regarding a player status. If you believe that this is not correct then contact the County FA office.



It is your responsibility to do this and if you register the player with the league you are confirming that you have made the appropriate checks. When registering a player the league will check that the player is not already registered for another member club and that the player is eligible by way of age. If it is later found that the player requires international clearance or is otherwise ineligible you will be at fault.

## **Registration Forms**

To register a player to play in the Combined Counties League, a fully completed Combined Counties League registration form must be completed. Mandatory details for each player are First Name, Surname, Date of Birth, Address (including Postcode) and at least one telephone number. In the case of Youth players, the completed form MUST also include the parent's or guardian's signature & address. Registration forms for the current season are available for download from the league website.

The detail from this registration form must then be entered into FULL-TIME by the Club Secretary using your account as a team administrator. You will normally receive an email from FULL-TIME when the league grant you access. Following the link in this email allows you to set a password to access your account. If you do not have an account contact the league and ask for one.

The league will accept and approve the registration clearing the player to be able to play. The original form must be scanned and emailed to the League Registrations Secretary to be received before the 5 day deadline and issue a registration number on Full-Time if everything is in order.

If the form is not received within the five days, the players' registration will be suspended, and they cannot play.

An incomplete registration form will not be approved and if the completed form does not match the FULL-TIME details, the registration will be cancelled. You are strongly advised to check that a registration number has been issued for all players before letting them play.

The original registration form is held by the club until the 30th June at the conclusion of the current playing season. The form must be produced if requested by the competition.

As per League Rules, registrations can be added to FULL-TIME up to 4 hours prior to the advertised kick off time.

Please also note if the player is on an FA contract, the contract must be lodged with The Football Association before the player can play albeit by fax/email before the original form is posted. The Football Association working office hours are (approx 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday).

Clubs are strongly recommended to check on FULL-TIME or contact the Registration Secretary and confirm a player's eligibility before the player plays in a match in the competition. It is not mandatory to contact the Registration Secretary beforehand. However, you will need the player's registration number for the result form. The player's registration details may be found on the FULL-TIME system when entered by the league. If the player has been approved in FULL-TIME and a registration number assigned the player is able to play.

## **Loan Players**

The short term & long term loan scheme is available to clubs in the Combined Counties League. Loans apply to the movement of contract players only.

A player who is contracted to a Club in the Isthmian/Southern/National League will be able to play for a Combined Counties League Club if the appropriate loan documents are completed in line with FA and league rules & regulations. You may

also take a contract player on a short/long term loan from another Combined Counties League/other step 5/6 league club.

There is no such thing as an official loan between clubs if the player concerned is a non-contract player. In such a case, it is effectively a gentleman's agreement whereby Club A allows Club B to sign the player for an agreed period. A transfer will be involved if both clubs are in the Combined Counties League. At the end of the agreed period, a further transfer will be required to enable the player to return to his previous club.

## **Player Suspensions**

Refer to the FA Rules Governing Suspensions And Suspension Maintenance. A copy is available from the league website. Step 5 & 6 leagues are subject to match based suspensions.

Where a player is under suspension it means suspension from playing all football for his Saturday side which also includes any midweek matches for that side. Sunday football is treated separately. If the player is sent off or suspended as a result of playing for his Team in the Premier Division or Division One of the Combined Counties League the ONLY matches that will clear the player of his suspension are those of his Combined Counties League Team.

Qualifying matches for clubs in the Combined Counties League are Premier Division, Division One, Premier Cup, Division One Cup, FA Cup, FA Vase and the Club's most senior parented County Cup matches. Other matches in this period, including those in outside competitions may not qualify towards the suspension but the player will miss these matches as he is suspended from all football.

For clubs who affiliate to two Counties, matches in the non-parented County Cup do not count towards the clearance of the suspension, even though the player remains suspended.

All suspensions resulting from on-field offences under the jurisdiction of the referee will automatically commence 7 days from the date of the offence. However, depending if another suspension is in force, the matches the player misses to complete the suspension may not always be the first match or matches on or after that 7th day.

If you are uncertain about the matches that a player will be suspended for, you should contact your County FA for advice.

The County FA will issue you the relevant paperwork regarding the player's suspension. However, if the paperwork from the County FA does not arrive it does not mean that the player is not suspended. The 7 day period still applies and you should contact your County FA office if you have not received the paperwork. The procedure for advising clubs of suspensions is changing as the Whole Game System comes into use. Further advice will be provided in due course

The paperwork must be signed by the player & the club secretary and you will be required to detail the qualifying matches for the suspension.

You also need to keep track of any fixture changes issued by the league as this may change the matches for an a player is suspended. You will be required to inform the County FA immediately so that they are aware of the change of qualifying matches for the suspension.

It is the Club Secretary's responsibility to keep a good record of all matches for each player and any suspensions that they incur. If you overlook a match and the player misses the wrong matches you may face further action from the County FA. You may also lose points if you play an ineligible player in a match.

## **SUGGESTED HOSPITALITY CRITERIA FOR HOME CLUBS**

Refer to League Rule 38 for details of mandatory requirements.

### **Before a Match**

1. The changing rooms must be prepared and open at least 1½ hours before the scheduled kick-off time. Ensure that the power is turned on to ensure hot water will be available when required.

### **Upon Arrival**

1. Ensure that someone, a club official, is delegated to meet the visiting team, its officials and the Match Officials and direct them to the Dressing Rooms/Clubhouse etc.
2. It is not mandatory but if your resources allow, supply squash/tea/coffee to players and match officials before the game.
3. If the visiting club officials have properly identified themselves, make tea/coffee available to them either in the boardroom or within a specially designated area.
4. Ensure that the required number of programmes are made available for players, match, visiting club & league officials prior to any first team match.
5. If possible, display the team details on a notice in the clubhouse or adjacent to the ground entrance.

### **At Half-Time**

1. Make sure that tea is prepared and ready in the dressing rooms. If the weather is hot, ask beforehand if clubs/match officials would prefer a cold drink.
2. Make sure that tea/coffee and light refreshments (biscuits usually) are ready and waiting in the boardroom or designated area for visiting officials. Try to use a proper table with a clean table cloth. Ensure that you have someone to act as host for your visitors.

### **At Full-Time**

1. Make sure that squash/tea is prepared and ready in the dressing rooms. Arrange for players' sandwiches to be served after the match. It is recommended that these are **not** served in the dressing rooms but in an area set aside in the clubhouse afterwards. Make sure though that any "rogue elements" from within your own club or elsewhere do not get to the refreshments first.
2. Entertain visiting club officials within the boardroom/designated area. It is not mandatory to supply alcoholic drinks although it is the normal practice to offer one such drink to each member of the visiting officials.
3. Invite the match officials into your boardroom or designated area and make sure that they receive refreshments. Irrespective of what may have happened during the match or what you think of the referee, make them as welcome as possible. Referees are usually pleased to discuss things that have happened if they are asked in a polite manner.

### **Visiting Clubs**

1. Your officials, in accordance with Rule 38.2, should make themselves known to the home club, especially if the clubs have not previously met. Home clubs should not have to make assumptions about who the visiting officials are.
2. Dress reasonably smartly if you are a club official. Some clubs have rules about standards of dress within their boardrooms/entertainment areas.

3. Once your officials have received the hospitality of the home club, make use of their bar if you're not driving. It is invariably noticed and appreciated by home clubs.
4. Most important – make sure that you and your players take up the hospitality offered by your hosts. This is a league requirement.

## **RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE FOR THE GUIDANCE OF CLUBS AND REFEREES IN DETERMINING THE SUITABILITY OF GROUNDS IN ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS**

Each Club must take every precaution to ensure that its ground is in a fit playing condition.

When the regional weather conditions are known to be extreme (e.g. prolonged severe frost, clear water logging or heavy snow) then the game can be postponed at the discretion of the League following consultation with the appropriate League Secretary / Officer. League Rules will apply; this is not an issue for the match day Referee. Should a Competition decide to agree to an early postponement under such circumstances there will be no requirement for a pitch inspection.

In all other circumstances and subject to the time and travelling distance, the match Referee should be called in to make a decision. In the event of the match Referee being unable to carry out the inspection, the Home Club must select a suitable alternative level 4 Referee.

Should it not be possible to identify an appropriate Match Official, the Appointing Authority (the Combined Counties League Referees Secretary) will determine a suitable person to carry out the inspection.

The home clubs shall advise the visiting club that they are contacting the match referee to perform a pitch inspection. The time of the inspection shall be given to the opposition and they shall be invited to be in attendance during the inspection. The visiting club may decline to be present but may request that they speak to the referee at the time of the inspection.

If a specific League Rule exists where the timing of a pitch inspection is stated, this will apply but is a League issue only.

Prior to reaching a decision the Referee who is making the inspection must:

- Consult with the match Referee prior to the inspection
- Consult with the match Referee during / after the inspection to mutually agree on a decision prior to notifying the Home Club Secretary or Club Chairman and the appropriate League Secretary (or Chairman if the Secretary is not available).

Prior to reaching a decision the Referee who is making the inspection should consider the following:

- The existing condition of the playing surface in conjunction with the prevailing weather conditions as previously confirmed with the local weather authority.
- The views of the Home Club Groundsman in terms of local knowledge and draining capabilities in the event of standing water
- The manpower available to the Home Club to carry out any necessary work to make the ground playable
- The time the visiting Club are due to commence their journey
- Whether or not the ground (playing area) is dangerous (e.g. ice / frost)
- Whether or not that the spectator standing areas are dangerous (e.g. ice / frost)

- Whether or not conditions are or could turn farcical
- In the event of fog check with the local weather authority re possible clearance, also bearing in mind the visitors travelling arrangements if the fog is known to be widespread. If fog is the problem then the match Referee should also consider whether or not the paying spectators would be able to view the whole area of play.

If after consultation with the match Referee, the ground is declared fit and the away Clubs instructed to travel, then only in exceptional circumstances should the match Referee reverse the decision.

If an early inspection has not been carried out and the match Referee arrives at the ground to find the playing conditions in doubt due to unexpected deterioration in the weather, he should first consider as many of the above points before committing himself to a decision.

In the event of a pitch inspection being carried out by a Referee other than the match Referee, a fee shall be offered, in line with the fees tariff, paid by the Home Club. If the appointed Match Officials have reported to the ground they are entitled to half their match fee (which is inclusive of travel expenses) if the match is not played.

If there is any doubt as to this procedure, the Referees Secretary should be the first point of contact.

## **IMPORTANT DATES IN THE ANNUAL CALENDAR**

<b>January 31st</b>	Latest date for the submission of proposals for alterations to Rules. League Rule 19.
<b>March 31st</b>	Latest date for the returning of trophies won in the previous season. League rule 18.
<b>March 31st</b>	Date by which a club must notify, in writing, its intention to withdraw any of its teams from the Competition at the end of the season. Rule 15.
<b>March 31st</b>	5pm - latest date and time for registrations for the current season.
<b>March 31st</b>	Latest date to have in place the facilities to obtain a required grading.
<b>March 31st</b>	Latest date to have in place a ground share for the following season. Rule 2.3.1. other than in exceptional circumstances.
<b>April 1st</b>	Closing date for entry forms for The Football Association; FA Cup and FA Vase
<b>June 1st</b>	Date by which clubs must provide the league with a list of contract players. Rule 6.7.
<b>June 1st</b>	Club County Affiliation forms must have been returned or submitted on WGS
<b>June 1st - 30th inc</b>	The recognised close season for The Football Association [This means any non-contract player may be approached for transfer without being subject to a seven day letter during this date range]

Fourteen days prior to the AGM The League Club Particulars form must have been returned

Seven days prior to the AGM The League Annual subscription must be paid

**August 1st** Clubs Annual Statement of Accounts should be with the County Football Association Fourteen days prior to league start.

Fourteen days prior to the first fixture of the season      At least sixteen players must be registered for the first team and eleven players for each other teams.

**September 1st**    Date by which clubs must provide list of FA qualified first aiders and welfare officers to the League Secretary

## **INTERPRETATION OF LEAGUE RULES**

The League rules are issued by the FA as the Standard League Rules. However, these were written mainly for leagues that play at Steps 1-4. The Board has deemed it necessary to provide an interpretation of some the FA Standard rules. This is included to provide guidance to member clubs.

If in doubt refer to the wording of the rule which shall take precedence.

### **2 MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS**

2.3      This fee associated with this rule is to cover any ground inspection required to ascertain that the facilities comply.

### **4 POWER OF THE BOARD**

#### **4.10 Representative Matches**

- a) Clubs shall place their players at the disposal of the League for such match or matches as may be deemed necessary by the Board.
- b) A player selected to play for the League and unable to accept the invitation will, only in exceptional circumstances, be allowed to play for his club in the League on the date of the match. Written consent must be obtained from the League General Secretary.
- c) Players who represent the League may be given an award at the discretion of the Board.
- d) If a match is arranged on a Saturday there should be no League programme on that day.

### **6 REGISTRATION OF PLAYERS**

#### **6.1 Player Registration**

Where a Club has sent in a registration via FULL-TIME, by fax or by email the onus is upon the Club to ensure that the player concerned is eligible to play. Clubs are strongly recommended to look at FULL-TIME or contact the League Registration Secretary before the player plays in a match in the competition. However, it will not be mandatory to contact the League Registration Secretary beforehand.

Registration forms can be downloaded from the League's official web site.

Following receipt of a player registration form, the Registrations Secretary shall assign a registration number and post that player onto FULL-TIME.

#### **6.4 Registrations and Registration Procedures**

6.4.2    A club shall keep a list the players it registers and a record of the games in which they have played and shall produce such records upon demand by the Board.

A register containing the names of all players registered with each club, with the date of registration, shall be kept and maintained on FULL-TIME by the League Registrations Secretary and shall be open to the inspection, with due notice, of any duly appointed member club representative at times mutually arranged with the League Registrations Secretary.

## TRANSFERS

- 6.5.2 Should a club object to the transfer of a player it should state its objections, in writing, to the League General Secretary and to the player concerned, within seven days of receipt of the application. Upon receipt an objection to a transfer, the matter shall be referred to the Board for a decision.

The cancellation of a player's registration is at the sole discretion of the club which holds the registration. There is no compulsion for a club to de-register a player whom has left the club. The registration may be held by that club until the end of the current season or until the player transfers to another club in accordance with rule 6.5.

The Board, in accordance with FA Rule C2(a)(i), have not introduced regulations for the approach of Players between Clubs of the Competition. The regulations in FA Rule C2(a) shall apply.

Transfer fees & player registrations, in excess of the initial number included in the annual subscription fee, and player de-registrations will be invoiced by the league at the end of the season.

## 6.9 PLAYING AN INELIGIBLE PLAYER

Where the playing of an unregistered or otherwise ineligible player or players is found to be a deliberate act the Board may call an Extraordinary General Meeting to consider the expulsion of the club at fault.

## 7 CLUB COLOURS

- 7.1 The League General Secretary may request that shirts be submitted to him if complaints are received as to lack of distinguishing colours and the Board may prohibit the use of any shirts or shorts that they consider unsuitable.
- 7.2 The nominated Club colours will be for first, development, youth & veterans teams. Only one set of home colours per club.

## 8 PLAYING OF MATCHES

- 8.1 The Board are required by The FA to target the end of April as the date upon which the normal playing season of the competition shall terminate. However, depending upon cup runs and prevailing weather conditions the season may be extended into May with permission from The FA. Clubs shall be compelled to play until the season is complete and shall keep their home ground available.
- 8.4 This rule shall also apply to Step 4 or above League fixtures (where ground sharing is in effect).  
No fixtures will take place on New Years Day unless it falls on a Saturday.  
This rule applies to the County Senior Cup Competition for Premier Division Clubs or Premier/Intermediate/Junior Cup Competition for clubs in other divisions.
- 8.6 Where floodlights are not available, during the period from the end of BST in October until the 15th February in the following year, all Saturday games will kick-off at 2pm. Evening kick-off's will be as determined by the Board. Where floodlights are installed and meet the grading criteria requirements these must be used to facilitate evening kick off matches.
- 8.8 Consent will only be granted on the clear understanding that the ruling set out in Rule 8.4 above is strictly adhered to and is recognised by the ruling body organising the said outside competition and also that all matches within the competition concerned are to be played on days other than Saturday except for competitions arranged by The Football Association.
- 8.12 All official communication to be received by these means.

8.13 Clubs will also give details of the location of the ground. Clubs may do so via email with a read receipt enabled. Should a read receipt not be received then a call should be made.

8.14 Where physical programmes are produced at least three complimentary programmes shall be provided in the visiting team dressing room, three in the match official's dressing room and a maximum of six programmes for visiting club officials. Also match programmes shall be provided for visiting League Officials. Match programmes are to be provided prior to the start of the match. Where electronic programmes are produced, this should be notified in the match confirmation.

An acceptable match programme shall include any official sponsor provided advertisements which shall be forwarded to members by the Board.

This rule only applies to First Team matches played under the auspices of the Competition.

8.17 "Policy for Issue of Match Day Passes"

The competition provides each member club in Step 5 & 6 with four (4) passes (Ground Passes), valid for one season, to allow the holders to obtain free admission at any match played under the auspices of the Competition except for League Cup Finals. A further four (4) passes (Club Passes) are provided to allow the holders to obtain free admission only to matches that involve the pass holder's club.

It is your responsibility to ensure these passes are provided to people who are bonafide members of your club and in a role which warrants the use of these passes (manager, director, club officer, committee member) and will observe the league rules and respect for other clubs. You will be held responsible for their behaviour.

Further passes will be issued to clubs with teams in the Development & Youth competitions. For each team entered there will be two (2) ground passes and two (2) club passes. These will be marked with the name of the club and the competition. These passes are not valid for entry into first team matches (Step 5 & 6). However, the four ground passes for first teams are valid for entry to Development & Youth matches.

Home clubs should check these passes at the gate and allow entry for any valid pass holder.

8.20 Clubs will use the official form provided by the league.

8.23 Referees shall report all cases of clubs starting with incomplete teams.

A minimum of seven players will constitute a team for a match in the Competition.

The intention of this rule is not to interfere with normal team selection by clubs, but to prevent clubs deliberately fielding a weakened team in order to unreasonably reserve players for another game or to boost the strength of another or lower team. It is not intended that clubs must field higher team players in lower teams when the higher team has no engagement. If in the opinion of the Board the substance of spirit of the rule is obviously being disregarded, the club or clubs concerned may be called to account for its/their actions and shall be subject to such decisions as the Board may determine, despite the fact that Rule 8.22 has not been infringed.

8.24 The Competition will only expect eight seats in accordance with FA grading criteria.

8.25 Refer to the latest updates to the Rules of the Game.

Refer to the "National League System Ground Grading Criteria" in this handbook.

The Technical Area, as defined in Law V. International board decision No. 14, shall be considered as extending one metre on either side of the designated seating



area, and shall extend forward to a distance of one metre away from the touchline. Markings are required to define the area.

8.28 All other persons shall remain outside the playing area and behind the barrier at all times.

8.31 The result form shall be the appropriate copy of the team sheet, as supplied by the Competition.

Results shall also be reported by SMS text message using the FULL-TIME system or by telephone only where necessary.

8.37 The reporting of attendance and goal scorers applies to First Team League & Cup matches only.

Results must be reported immediately following the conclusion of each home Competition match. However, the following deadlines apply. Afternoon matches - no later than 5.15pm; morning matches - no later than 1.30pm and for evening matches - no later than 10.00pm.

Where extra time is necessary in cup competitions, the 90 minutes score must be reported in by 5.10pm, and then a further thirty (30) minutes will be permitted for the final score.

Any club playing in any competition outside the jurisdiction of this League shall also report the result of their match under the terms of this rule.

Should a club be fined for this offence on more than two occasions in any one season, the fine on the third occasion and subsequent occasions will be increased to an amount decided by the board (See the fines tariff in the handbook).

For first team matches only, the home club must advise the Fixture Secretary, either by phone, fax or e-mail, of the names of the scorers of all goals scored during the match and the times scored. The deadline for these details is no later than 12.00 noon on the Sunday if the match is on a Saturday, or no later than 10.00 pm on the following day if a midweek match.

8.38 In this rule, the term "Appointing Authority" shall refer to the League Referees and Assistant Referees Secretaries, and the League Fixtures Secretary. These officers may be informed by text or email.

This procedure must be followed for the postponement of any match, once it has appeared in the match appointments bulletin.

## **10 FINANCIAL RECORDS**

10.1 Clubs are expected to settle all accounts payable to the competition via electronic payments from an account in the name of the club. Annual subscriptions must be paid in this manner.

10.3 The League will not implement the equalisation scheme and will continue to define an inclusive fee. As such, that there will be no need for equalisation at the end of the season.

## **12 CHAMPION, RELEGATION**

12.3 All movements directed by the FA Leagues Committee in accordance with the regulations of the NLS shall take place before the provisions of paragraph 13.4 are applied.

12.9 A club shall not be allowed to withdraw any of all of its teams from the League after the Annual General Meeting each year. Any club infringing this rule shall also be liable to a fine (See fines & fees in the league handbook).

The constitution for the coming season having been decided at a Special General Meeting held for the purpose, or at the Annual General Meeting, the Board shall

have the right, irrespective of other provisions in this rule, to refuse to permit a club to withdraw its team(s) in order to join another competition and may hold the club to its engagements.

A club playing record shall include all points and goals obtained by or recorded against that club.

## **15 WITHDRAWAL OF CLUBS**

Clubs in membership not having notified the League General Secretary of their intention to withdraw shall be assumed to be continuing in membership for the following season.

A club having given written notice of its intention to withdraw, may withdraw that notice but only with the approval of the competition which may not be given.

A club withdrawing any or all of its teams from the League after the Annual General Meeting each year will be in default of this rule and shall also be liable for its share of any monies due under these Rules.

This rule applies to the withdrawal of any team, first, development, veteran or youth team.

## **16 PROTESTS, APPEALS**

16.1 All questions of eligibility, qualifications of players, or interpretations of the rules shall be referred to the Board.

16.2 No objection or protest shall be withdrawn except by permission of the Board.

## **17 MISCONDUCT OF CLUBS, OFFICERS, PLAYERS**

Misconduct referred to is not in respect of misconduct on the field of play.

## **18 TROPHY**

If the competition be discontinued for any cause, the Cup or Trophy shall be returned to the donor if the conditions attached to it so provide, held in trust, or otherwise dealt with as the Board may decide.

Trophies shall be returned by 31st March of the following year to the League General Secretary, or other nominated officer, suitably engraved and cleaned.

Any box or container in which the trophy is supplied shall also be the subject of this rule and its loss or damage shall also be subject to a fine.

## **38 HOSPITALITY CRITERIA**

See "Suggested Hospitality Criteria for Home Clubs" in this guide.

## FINES PROCEDURE

The Combined Counties League will issue fine notices, where possible, within 5 days of the incident being reported. The fine will be issued by email to the Club Secretary and copied to the League General Secretary and League Treasurer.

A Club has 28 days, from the date of issue of the Fines Notice, to pay the fine.

Payment is to be made to the Fines Secretary sending a cheque made out to the Combined Counties Football League Limited. If payment is made through a Bank Transfer, **the Fines Secretary must be advised**, in order to maintain an up to date fines record and to avoid unnecessary follow-ups.

In the event of a fine not being paid, 21 days after being issued, a further notice will be sent to the Club Chairman, copied to the Club Secretary, League General Secretary & League Treasurer.

Should the fine still remain unpaid after a further 7 days, a further fine will be imposed under Rule 4.5. Should that fine, plus the original fine, remain unpaid after a further 14 days, the Club will be liable to suspension under Rule 4.6.

Any query about a fine should be addressed to the League Officer raising the fine. In the event that the offense was reported by the referee, the query must be addressed to the Referees' Secretary, not the referee. Should the officer concerned decline to rescind the fine, Clubs may protest to the League under Rule 16. Note: the 14 day protest period starts from the date of issue of the original fine. Clubs should bear this in mind, especially if a referees' report is queried, as the Referees' Secretary needs time to contact the match official.

## FINES DISCIPLINE

Any club incurring 4 fines in any period of 3 months, will be called to appear before the Disciplinary Sub-Committee. Should the same Club similarly transgress again in the same season, the Club will again be called before the League Management Committee, and a fine may be imposed under Rule 4.8.

Any club incurring 3 or more fines under rule 4.5 in a season, will be called before the League Management Committee, and a fine may be imposed under Rule 4.8.

## REPORTING OF RESULTS USING TEXTING TO FULL TIME

The Combined Counties League uses The FA FULL-TIME SMS result reporting system for all competition matches. This system makes the reporting of results easier for clubs whilst also providing a more rapid results service where clubs are able to access results of league & cup matches soon after they have been completed.

Results may be reported by text message immediately after a match and will then be available to view from the internet using a PC or mobile phone/device.

For each team, two mobile numbers can be registered. This allows two people to report the result for any match. Only one text is required to successfully make the report. The two people you want to register to report results must be logged with the league. Please make sure you send any update or change of these two people & numbers at least 48 hours before games kick off to give the league time to process them.

To report the result of a league or league cup match using the SMS message system the following procedure should be used:

During each game, the FA system will send an SMS Text Message to each registered mobile number, reminding you to send in the result of the game. After the game, both home and away clubs should report the score by replying to their message giving the score for the game, home team first, away team second, and separated by a hyphen.

For example: -

The system will send a text message similar to the following:-

FULL-TIME @TheFA HOME v AWAY K.O. SAT 01 SEP 2017 15:00. Submit your result after the match as: H-A

To report a 2-1 win to the home side you would simply reply: 2-1

It is important to note you should not add other information or the Full-Time system will ignore your result. The text must be sent from one of the registered mobiles as "Full-Time" identifies you by the mobile number it has been given.

Full-Time allows you to report postponements [P-P] and abandonment's [A-A]. Only send these characters when reporting such a result.

If the match is in a cup competition, the full-time result, at the conclusion of 90 minutes, must be reported in accordance with Rule 8.20, this can be done either by text or by telephoning the league results service. Where extra-time is played the final result must also be reported. This should be done using the text service to ensure that the Full-Time system records the final result.

The result should be reported at the conclusion of extra time using the normal format followed by AET & PENS if required: e.g. 2-2 3-3 AET 3-1 PENS

You are required to potentially send back up to three pieces of information in the same SMS text message:-

1. Score – The score after normal time in the usual way
2. Extra Time score – the score line after extra time, followed by AET (it is essential that AET is included, to identify that the scores beforehand applies to extra time)
4. Penalty score – the score after penalties, followed by PEN (it is essential that PEN is included, to identify that the scores beforehand applies to penalties)

If the normal time score is not level, then any extra time and penalty score will be ignored.

If you make a mistake with a text message, don't worry. The system will take the last message that you send so just send a correct message and this will over-ride any incorrect message previously sent.

### **Hints and Tips**

- 1 Make sure you give the home score first, away score second.
- 2 Tell the league if you change your mobile number
- 3 Tell the league if a fixture is incorrect on Full-Time (or the league website) before the game is played.
- 4 If you make a mistake, just send another message with the correct result
- 5 Do not include any team names or dates in the text message

This procedure only applies to league & cup matches in the Combined Counties League at present. The results of other matches should be phoned to the results secretary nominated by the league as is the current procedure.

If you spot that a result is shown incorrectly on FULL-TIME or on the league website please inform the league. This means that the last result reported by SMS messaging was incorrect. The club at fault may pick up a fine.